

VZCZCXRO9418
OO RUEHDA
DE RUEHAK #2355/01 2601454
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 171454Z SEP 07
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3768
RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC//PA
RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU
INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 8366
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 3308
RUEHDA/AMCONSUL ADANA 2304
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 6141
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 5946
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2541
RUEUITH/DET 1 39LG ANKARA TU
RHMFIUU/USDOCO 6ATAF IZMIR TU
RHMFIUU/39OS INCIRLIK AB TU
RHMFIUU/AFOSI DET 523 IZMIR TU
RHMFIUU/39ABG INCIRLIK AB TU
RHMFIUU/AFOSI DET 522 INCIRLIK AB TU
RUEUITH/AFLO ANKARA TU

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 002355

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EUR/SE, EUR/PD, NEA/PD, DRL
JCS PASS J-5/CDR S. WRIGHT

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2007

In Today's Papers

AKP Finalizes Work on New Draft Constitution

All papers report that Turkey's ruling AK Party has received the controversial new draft constitution prepared by academic experts. The AKP commission discussing the new draft constitution concluded its work in Sapanca near Istanbul over the weekend. The head of the commission, AKP deputy chairman Dengir Mir Mehmet Firat said the draft in its final form would be made public this week. Firat said the "civilian" constitution drafted by the AKP gives priority to the individual.

Papers say the draft envisages an overhaul of the judiciary and the body overseeing higher education (YOK) grants positive discrimination for women, elderly people and children, gives the president only symbolic powers, and allows for legal action against rulings of the High Military Council and the High Board of Judges and Prosecutors. According to the draft, the chief of the General Staff and the Parliament Speaker will be tried by the Supreme Court in case they face accusations. The draft makes six alternative proposals with regard to the lifting of the ban on headscarves in universities. The draft also restricts parliamentary immunities by enabling trials of members of parliament charged with bribery, corruption and other offences. It also makes religious instruction in schools optional. Papers expect the final decision on critical issues such as wearing the headscarf in universities to be made by Prime Minister Erdogan.

Burns Due to Visit Turkey

Papers over the weekend and today report US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns, addressing the Atlantic Council, described Turkey as a "crucial and indispensable" partner of the US. Burns expressed concern over the energy deal signed between Turkey and Iran, and urged Turkey to cooperate with the US in fighting Iranian ambitions. He noted he expected concrete moves against the PKK in the next six months. Burns urged Turkey to reopen Halki Orthodox Seminary in Istanbul, normalize ties with

Armenia, and scrap penal code Article 301 which restricts free speech. Burns also added the US was working to launch a new UN initiative in Cyprus.

Weekend papers report Burns stressed the strains between the US and Turkey over the Turkish Parliament's refusal to allow US to open a northern front through Turkey in Iraq was now "a thing of the past."

Mainstream Milliyet reports on Saturday under a front-page headline, "US to Turkey: We Forgot the March 1 Decree," that Burns said US wants to "renew and strengthen" its strategic partnership with Turkey, stressing that US ties with Turkey, a neighbor to Iraq, Syria and Iran, would be "very important" in 2008. Burns also called for "Europe's full embrace of a reformed Turkey," says the paper. Under the headline, "We have turned the juncture with Turkey," mainstream Sabah also reports Burns said US-Turkey tension over the March 1 decree was now over. Tabloid Aksam reports Burns, prior to his visit to Ankara, called on Turkey to "participate more" in the Middle East, and also said "I trust President Gul." The pro-government, Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports Burns gave "positive messages" on the eve of his visit to Turkey, in a report under the headline "Burns Coming to Turkey to Repair Ties." Reporting from Washington, Islamist-oriented Zaman says Burns declined to make any concrete pledges for fighting against the PKK, but demanded cooperation against Iran. The paper also reports Burns said the US wanted to block Russia from controlling oil and natural gas sources and the pipelines extending toward Western countries. "I'm sure Turkey appreciates our huge support for alternate pipelines," Burns is quoted as saying.

Editorial Commentary on Burns' Upcoming Turkey Visit

Ali Aslan comments in the Islamist-leaning daily Zaman: "U/S Burns' remarks at the Atlantic Council reflected the Bush administration's view on the current phase of Turkish-American relations. Burns

ANKARA 00002355 002 OF 003

stated that bilateral relations have entered a new era and called for a revival of the strategic partnership. Yet observers question the chance for a revival of bilateral ties especially because of the fact that the words of the Strategic Vision Document have not been converted into action over the last two years. Burns listed the American administration's expectations from Turkey including full commitment to sanctions against Iran and opening the Turkish-Armenian border. However what Turkey would gain from the US by doing this was not clear. It is not very realistic to expect Turkey to act in full compliance with the US expectations before the US takes action to fulfill Turkey's expectation regarding the PKK in northern Iraq. Burns emphasized the unique influence of Turkey in the region. But he did not seem to understand that Turkey gained this unique influence by staying at a certain distance toward the isolationist and [internationally] unpopular policies of the US. Let's hope that this time, when he visits Turkey, he keeps his ears open as to what Turkey is saying, unlike before the Iraq war when all of Turkey's views were just ignored. And the US should also think in the gain-gain spirit in its bilateral ties with Turkey."

Murat Yetkin writes in the liberal-intellectual daily Radikal:

"Prior to his upcoming trip to Turkey, U/S Burns expressed three expectations from Ankara: The ruling AKP, after its elections victory, should extend a hand to Armenia. Burns repeated Washington's opposition to an Armenian resolution and also did not hide that by saying 'extending a hand,' he meant opening the border with Armenia; the AKP should lift Article 301 in Penal Code; and the AKP should re-open the Greek Orthodox Halki Seminary. These expectations came at a time when both the government and the public have given up their hopes for seeing concrete action from the US regarding PKK, and they will put both President Gul and PM Erdogan in a difficult position. The only consolation is the fact that Burns did not yet express their military expectations from Turkey. The most significant change in Ankara as far as the US is concerned is the fact that the AKP has gained more political ground and a full harmony between the government and presidency can be expected. This does not necessarily mean that military relations will be minimized. On the contrary, Afghanistan is likely the area of more military talks [between the US and Turkey]."

PKK Members Detained over Foiled Car Bomb Attack in Ankara

All papers report seven suspected members of the PKK terror organization have been taken into custody in Baskale, Van, for possible involvement in a bomb-laden minivan attack averted in Ankara last week. On September 11, police seized 300 kg TNT and sodium nitrate and 280 kg of bomb-making material in a stolen minivan in a parking lot in a crowded neighborhood in downtown Ankara. Papers say the explosives found inside the minivan match those seized in an operation against the PKK on May 5 last year.

The US "International Religious Freedom Report" Sabah, Milliyet, and others: The US State Department "International Religious Freedom Report" draws attention to the social pressure on non-Muslims in Turkey. The report noted that the ban on religious attire continues and that non-Muslims cannot be promoted to high state offices and that Alevis are obliged to attend classes where Sunni Islam is taught. The report also stressed that there haven't been any developments on religious freedom in Turkey and the missionaries continue to be targets of harassment.

Retired US Ambassador Peter Galbraith Comments on the PKK
Mainstream Sabah and Milliyet report that in an interview with Newsweek magazine, retired US Ambassador and former advisor for the Kurdish Leaders in Northern Iraq Peter Galbraith said that if Turkey declares a general amnesty the PKK problem would be resolved. Galbraith claimed that the PKK had become a moderate organization and left behind its claims of separatism.

TV News:
NTV

ANKARA 00002355 003 OF 003

Domestic News

- The new school year kicks off with 14 million students and 600,000 teachers on Monday. President Abdullah Gul says modern education policies would be pursued with determination.
- Turkey's elite business forum TUSIAD chairwoman Arzuhan Yalcindag has sent a letter to US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi expressing concern regarding efforts to recognize Armenian genocide claims.
- Religious affairs (Diyanet) director Professor Ali Bardakoglu hosted in Istanbul a Ramadan fast-breaking dinner in honor of non-Muslim religious leaders including Greek Orthodox and Armenian Patriarchs, Bartholomew I and Mesrob Mutafyan.
- Two PKK terrorists have been killed by security forces in the southeastern province of Batman.

International News

- Greece's ruling conservatives led by PM Karamanlis won a second mandate in elections on Sunday despite public anger over the government's handling of deadly forest fires.
- French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner said on Sunday his country must prepare for a possible war against Iran, but that he did not believe any such action was imminent.
- Kuwaiti newspaper Al-Jarida claims Turkey provided Israel with intelligence on Syria prior to last week's alleged IAF flyover into the country.
- On Saturday, the Iraqi parliament bloc loyal to influential cleric Muqtada al-Sadr walked out of Iraq's ruling Shiite coalition.

WILSON